

**COLORADO RIVER RECOVERY PROGRAM  
FY-2003 ANNUAL REPORT**

**Project No.: PIP 12L**

**I.** Project title: Communications/Public Involvement Plan for Nonnative Fish Management

**II.** Principal investigator:

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**III.** Project summary:

In 2003, the Recovery Program expanded efforts to identify management actions to minimize or remove the threat of nonnative fishes to survival of the endangered fishes as described in the recovery goals. From late April through October, biologists worked in sections of 438 miles of river in Colorado and Utah to experimentally manage the targeted species. Where appropriate and practical, biologists transferred fish from the river to local ponds and reservoirs that were publicly accessible to anglers. The Recovery Program prepared and implemented a comprehensive communications plan to raise public awareness of the purpose and nature of nonnative fish management.

**IV.** Study Schedule:

Initial year: 2003  
Final year: Duration of Recovery Program.

**V.** Relationship to RIPRAP:

**VI. INCREASE PUBLIC AWARENESS AND SUPPORT FOR THE  
ENDANGERED FISHES AND THE RECOVERY PROGRAM.**

**VI. Accomplishment of FY 2003 objectives and tasks:**

- Tactic: Establish Action Planning Teams  
Status: Three communication teams were formed in FY 2003 – two for Colorado and one for Utah. The teams represented agencies conducting nonnative fish management actions. The Yampa River Basin Partnership was involved with the Action Planning Team for the Yampa River. Team members reviewed educational materials including fact sheets and questions/answers. They served as advisors for planned outreach efforts and many members participated in public meetings. The State of Utah developed and implemented its own communications plan to assist with outreach efforts.
- Tactic: Develop and Promote Key Messages  
Status: Key messages were developed and approved by Recovery Program partners and the action planning teams. While trying to get all partners/agencies to “speak with one voice” the Recovery Program determined that it needed a nonnative fish management policy. The policy was drafted and approval is anticipated in early FY 2004.
- Tactic: Maintain Active Communication with Members of Congress and Their Staffs (Local and D.C.) and Local Elected Officials  
Status: Briefing packets and a news release were prepared and distributed to key members of congress, local sheriffs and county commissioners in communities where the majority of work occurred. The Recovery Program prepared draft responses for two Congressionals who received letters of complaint from a constituent.
- Tactic: Actively Seek News Media Coverage of Nonnative Fish Management Actions and Public Meetings  
Status: The State of Utah and the I&E Coordinator made a concerted effort to obtain news media coverage both before and during field activities. Reporters were invited to accompany biologists as they performed the work. This resulted in a lot of publicity, including good advance promotion of the public meetings.
- Tactic: Identify and Seek Permission from Landowners to Access Their Property as Part of Recovery Actions  
Status: This was not needed in FY 2003 because biologists conducting the work did not need access to private property along the river.

Tactic:	Establish Local Spokeperson(s)
Status:	Key people from the Recovery Program and agencies conducting the field work were identified to address news media inquiries and to speak at the public meetings.
Tactic:	Train Appropriate Staff/Volunteers Who Might Receive Questions from the Public and Congressional Staff
Status:	Agencies provided questions/answers and fact sheets to staff. The I&E Coordinator should follow-up with members of Action Planning Teams to determine whether or not this was effective, or whether more formal briefings should also take place from agency leaders.
Tactic:	Participate in Angler Roundtables and/or Public Meetings
Status:	Public meetings were held in Grand Junction, Steamboat Springs and Craig, Colorado, and in Vernal and Green River, Utah. (CDOW did not host angler roundtables in FY 2003.) The meetings were well attended in Grand Junction and Craig by anglers who opposed planned efforts to remove catfish and northern pike from the rivers. In Steamboat Springs, most people supported the planned work in the Yampa River. In Utah, some people expressed opposition to catfish removal.
Tactic:	Post Information on Agency Websites
Status:	The Recovery Program posted a news release, questions/answers and fact sheets on its public website. This is another area where partner agencies can help in FY 2004.
Tactic:	Distribute Information to Fishing and River Guides/Sporting Goods Stores
Status:	Colorado Division of Wildlife staff distributed information to Sporting Goods Stores in the Craig/Steamboat Springs areas and some biologists who conducted the field work talked with guides and sporting goods store employees informally. The Recovery Program did not actively work to notify these groups in FY 2003 and this should be revisited in FY 2004.
Tactic:	Publish Articles in Agency Publications
Status:	The Recovery Program's Winter 03 newsletter featured an article introducing readers to the issues related to the threats to endangered fishes posed by nonnative fishes. This is an area where partner agencies can help further public awareness of the issue and what needs to be done to remove the threat of nonnative fishes.

**VII.** Recommendations: In FY 2004 and 2005, it is imperative that the communication efforts launched in FY 2003 continue and that target audiences are well informed of activities that will take place. The Recovery Program should continue to work closely with members of the Action Planning Teams – both for advice on actions to occur and for help implementing the actions. The Recovery Program should seek more support from Recovery Program partner agencies to help with outreach efforts, particularly in the areas of publishing articles in agency publications, posting information to agency websites, submitting guest editorials to newspapers as appropriate, and participating in any public meetings that may be held.

**VIII.** Project Status: On-track and ongoing.

**IX.** FY 03 Budget:

- A. Funds provided: -0-
- B. Funds Expended: \$1,800
- C. Difference: \$1,800 (taken from PIP 12)
- D. Percent of FY 03 work completed and projected costs to complete: 100%, none
- E. Recovery Program funds spent for publication charges: Not applicable.

**X.** Status of Data Submission: Not applicable.

**XI.** Signed: Debbie Felker  
Information & Education Coordinator

January 20, 2004  
Date